



## **Seesaw Syndrome**

In their new book, “The Seesaw Syndrome,” Rex and Mickey Gatto propose that appropriately balancing time will make our personal and professional life more manageable and easier. Time is a traveling partner, not an enemy and, as such, can be a relaxing moment or a continually stressful event. It is our own choice. We all try to balance work, family and self but most often, one of those three is up when it should be down, and all three down at the same time gets us nowhere, just like a See Saw. Thus we have the See Saw Syndrome in our lives. However, there are ways to keep work, family and self balanced, some of which include multi-tasking, planning for interruptions, and scheduling personal time, just like you would schedule a business meeting.

*THOUGHT: Is it time management or self-management?*

Time in the U.S. is viewed as a resource that is scarce and must be wisely and efficiently used. This view results in extreme impatience about uncontrollable delays (traffic jams, unexpected visitors, etc.) and pushes us to try to fit in as many activities as possible in a day (usually from an unrealistic point). By contrast, many Eastern cultures view time as unlimited and unending, - an inexhaustible resource. We are driven by our culture, and we allow it to create in us certain behaviors which are impelled by what we consider to be rational thinking: time is money; time waits for no man, that’s a waste of time, etc.

## **Common sense approaches to stopping the see saw in your life**

Below are six points that are common sense approaches toward working with others to meet time requirements. You may think you are doing all of these things, but do not review these points from your perspective. Try to look at them from your boss, peer, or direct report’s point of view.

*THOUGHT: Often the mismanagement of time is the mismanagement of communication!*

1. Identify what you want to accomplish.  
Do you clearly state expectations?  
Do you know desired end results and goals?  
What will cause you to achieve what you want?  
What are the possible outcomes?  
What are the best/worst scenarios?  
How much time do you guess it will take?
2. Be responsible for achieving what you want.

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Do you share what you are doing to accomplish expectations?

Do you work independently and have the self-confidence to act?

Do you reflect and use your personality and individual communication, learning, and working styles?

Do you initiate the action that you feel will make you successful while meeting time requirements?

3. Establish a focused direction along with priorities.

Do you share your plan?

Do you know what is urgent versus what is important? If you know what is important and do it, you will lessen "daily crises."

- Set Priorities:
- Focus on: job responsibilities; meeting business and personal goals; ongoing process.
- Outline your responsibilities and striving to accomplish them.
- Outline problems, special meetings; crises. You must act now for things such as the boss' interruption, customer crises, accidents or safety problems.
- Plan for interruptions: A ringing telephone; a crisis for your boss or peer.
- Unfocused time: Discussing issues; unnecessary meetings; social interruptions.

4. Do you develop alternative solutions to come to agreement of time priorities?

Are you flexible to changing priorities?

Resolving conflict is a way to measure the strength of a relationship - conflict is very easy to see between people; however, agreement needs to be discussed and established. Most often agreement is taken for granted or assumed, and that is a mistake. Explain why something is being accomplished and why something else is not. Explain the priority.

Establish the win/win mentality through setting time priorities.

5. Communicate by creating a mutual understand (listen, then respond). If you do this, you will not need to meet again to clarify.

**Clearly identify** the topic to be discussed.

**Ask** the other person to express his/her needs.

**Be quiet and listen.** Learn what the other person needs, then express your thoughts, bridging what you can offer via work or time commitment.

**Ask clarifying questions** about time requirements and commitments - expected results.

**Do not leave and then say,** "I should have asked, but he/she was upset so I could not bring it up. I should have said no. I should have pushed the deadline back." Do and say what is necessary the first time

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**Establish trust.** Be open, respectful and willing to listen. Do not go in knowing the answers, because you may not know the right questions. For example, when working with a customer, ask what the customer's expectations are, what your expectations are, and how you will blend the two.

## 6. Create Cooperation.

Share your ideas and get the time commitment from all the people involved. The more you and others work together, the better the working relationship and outcome will be. If you and the others discuss issues, a sharing will occur and less finger pointing will take place if a time problem arises.

## **TWO TYPES OF TIME**

### Controlled Time

This is time, which is completely under your own control. You have the discretion of how you will use the time.

### Uncontrolled/Reactive Time

Time which is used at the demand of others. The telephone rings, your boss drops in, an employee stops by to ask questions.

If too much of the work day is based on uncontrolled time, your productivity may slip. You may also be the victim of:

- distractions;
- interruptions;
- endless meetings;
- work overload because you can't get to it.

### Getting a Handle on Controlling Your Time

To begin the process, you need to establish a balance between controlled and uncontrolled time. Fill in the following chart with your daily work activities and the amount of time each takes. You may want to choose a particular day and fill out the chart as the activities occur. At the end of the day, decide whether each activity was Controlled Time Use or Uncontrolled/Reactive Time Use.

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Activity	Total Hours	Controlled	Uncontrolled	Comment
Reading				
Telephone & Voice Mail				
Lunch, Breaks				
Crises				
Interruptions				
Planning				
Drop Ins				
Meetings				
Computer time- e-mail, etc				
Unproductive time (social)				
Boss' needs				
Assist co-workers				
Correspondence				
Other				

## See Saw Syndrome

- mismanagement of communication; lack of focus on agreement
- mismanagement of workload
- mismanagement of interruptions (you need to plan for interruptions)
- lack of agreement, expectations and clarity of what is to be accomplished
- lack of asserting your own viewpoint; not wanting to take a risk
- not paying attention to where time goes; not controlling the time you can control



Now, make a list of your controlled versus your uncontrolled activities, and the amount of time each took.

Controlled Activities	Amount of Time It Took	Uncontrolled Activities	Amount of Time It Took

Your controlled time should be about 55% of the time in your schedule during the working day.

## ANALYSIS OF TIME

After reviewing your time assessments, draw some personal conclusions and record your responses to the following questions.

1. Which part of each day was most productive? Which was least productive? Why?

Productive \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Unproductive \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What are the recurring patterns of efficiency and of inefficiency?

Efficiency \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Inefficiency \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

—



3. What do you do that may not be necessary? What is necessary?

Necessary \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Unnecessary \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. How could you eliminate some of the uncontrolled time activities?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. How can you turn the uncontrolled time activities into controlled time activities?

List some specific uncontrolled activities and think about how to change them.

Activity 1:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Activity 2:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Activity 3:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## **TOOLS FOR IMPROVING TIME MANAGEMENT**

To successfully control your time, utilize the following tools:

Focus on what needs to be achieved; focus on the goals and results.

Focus on performance standards.

Focus on the big picture, not minute-to-minute changes.

Focus on interactions and requests by associates and organizational authorities,  
and then prioritize them.

Focus on the trade off for performing one task versus another task.

### **Summary**

You can control the Seesaw Syndrome by finding the fulcrum in your life to create a balance of work, family and self, making the choices to establish the quality of life that you want. To gain control of the time in your life and stop the See Saw Syndrome, use the tools of prevention. You need to use visuals that will clearly help you focus time toward reaching your goals for success.